

TEN MINUTES CAUTION To the Friends of Old England.

IT is, in general, of very little importance to the reader to know who, or what sort of person, the writer of any thing is. But to you, my friends and fellow citizens, I think it is material to consider who the men are whose writings on public matters are recommended to your perusal. In this view, you will permit me to tell you something of myself. I will first tell you what I am not. I am not a foreigner, an alien to this country, who would gratify resentment as well as pride by throwing it into confusion. I am not a desperate and profligate incendiary, whose circumstances cannot be made worse by any change, who will take the chance of setting the house on fire, that he may pilfer the furniture while it is burning. I am not a furious enthusiast in religion or politics, who, under pretence of toleration in the one, or liberty in the other, would overturn the established Church or the established Constitution. I am none of those, my brethren. I am a plain man, a tradesman, who, having acquired a competency by his honest industry, is now winding up his business, in order to enjoy that competency in ease and quiet, in his old age, in the midst of a virtuous family of his own rearing. I know nothing of great men or Ministers, and concern myself no farther about them than as I think their measures are for the interest of my country. I care not who sits at the helm of the state vessel, provided she be well steered. But though I am perfectly independent as to my own circumstances, yet I am dependent as far as this goes, that the happiness, or the prospect of the happiness, of my fellow citizens makes me happy; their unhappiness, or the fear of their unhappiness, makes me unhappy.

IN this character, and with these feelings, I am tempted to use my pen, for the first time in public, to caution you, my countrymen, against the mischief which some men, and some writers, of this sort I have mentioned above, would wish to do among you; to beg of you not to endanger the peace and prosperity of yourselves and your country to gratify the malice, the ambition, or the hopes of gain, which such men entertain, and which they trust to their own arts and our silliness to enable them to accomplish.

CONSIDER, my friends, at what time, and in what circumstances, those men would persuade us to make a change in our situation. Would any of us think it prudent, in the way of our trade, if our business were good, our shop well frequented, our customers increasing, in short, every thing about us in a thriving condition, all at once to alter our *firm*, to change our agents abroad, to dismiss our clerks and servants at home, and to tell our customers that we were to deal in a quite different way with them for the future? Would any of us do this? or would not our relations take out a commission of lunacy against us if we did?—Just as madly, my friends, it appears to me, should we act, if, in the present situation of our public affairs, we should think of altering that constitution under which, by the blessing of God; we have attained, and enjoy, our present national security and prosperity.

254

THOSE gentlemen wish to make court to us by setting forth the injustice of the inequality of condition between us and the great men who have the management of public affairs. For my part, I don't envy those great men their rank and state. I believe, in my conscience, I am as happy as any, and much happier than most of them. But any man who thinks otherwise, and who aspires to those situations, may, if he has industry and abilities fit for it, work his way into public office as into other fortunate, or what are called fortunate situations. In this country there is no exclusion of men from such situations on account of their inferiority in birth or family; a fellow 'prentice of mine is now a Member of Parliament, and very much respected in the House of Commons; but I would not change situations with him for all that.

I SHOULD be glad to know what advantage we are to get by the levelling of ranks, which those writers would persuade us to wish for, by regaining what they call the *Rights of Man*. If they have a mind to go back to the woods again, and live as they say men lived in this country two thousand years ago, let them, in God's name; but I, who am sitting in a good snug parlour, with all my family comforts around me, will rather chuse to keep as I am. If there is to be any society at all, I presume some must necessarily be richer and more powerful than others; but if those who have little, are secure of it, I say, as I said before, they may be as happy as those who have the most. As things are at present, I find great advantage in the riches and grandeur of some of my countrymen. I have a set of wealthy customers, who put a great deal of money into my pocket in the year, whose expences, suitable to their rank and situation in life, enable me to enjoy all the solid comforts suitable to mine.

I RECEIVED, some time ago, a letter from an old friend and correspondent at *Manchester*, full of hard words, and in a high-flown stile, complaining of the extravagance and luxury of Dukes and Lords, who were no better flesh and blood than he or I, and asking me to put down my name to a set of resolutions for correcting that abuse. I thought at first my old friend had been playing upon me, as it was about the *fooling* time of the year; but when I was told that there were seriously such resolutions proposed at *Manchester*, I wrote a serious answer. I desired him to recollect how much of my money had gone through his hands since our first dealings with one another, and that I believed in my conscience there was scarce a single *necessary* in all our accounts; so that if *luxury* was to be put down, he must shut up shop. I believe my good friend was ashamed of himself, for he answered my next order, and said nothing more of the resolutions.

My way always is, to let every one live as they please, provided they live honestly, and do their neighbours no harm. I know, and so do you, my friends, that none of those Dukes or Lords dare touch a hair of our heads, or a halfpenny of our properties, any more than we can of theirs. Let them have what rank or power they may, the law is stronger than them. Indeed I don't believe they have any inclination to wrong or oppress any of us; I am not quite sure if that would be the case were our equals and neighbours to get suddenly into power. Those great folks have no interference with us, and they have a pride as well as an interest in the country's thriving, and our thriving with it. But if, for instance, my neighbour over the way were to become Judge, I am afraid he would recollect a foolish quarrel that happened a few years ago with several of our parishioners, and perhaps justice would not be so impartially administered in his hands as we know it is at present. As to myself, though I think him a good sort of man in many respects, I do not know how he

would use his new-gotten power, and, for one, I should not like to come within his clutches.

THE modern levellers always tell us what we are to gain by their plan, but, my friends, it is necessary for us to think what we should lose by it. Every man in a decent situation in life, even if he makes his bread by the sweat of his brow, has something he can call his own, something he feels comfortable in, and which his way of life has made more suitable to him than the fine things of other people in a higher sphere, which is generally a situation of more care than comfort.

You and I, and every man who has something to preserve for himself, or is too honest to encroach on his neighbours, will tremble at the effects of throwing loose every bond of peace and

consequences in the burning of their cotton mills. The spinners thought these mills were hurtful to the industrious poor, though I am told by impartial men, who know the subject well, that they have, in truth, been the means of giving bread to thousands. They say that by increasing our commerce in this article of manufacture, more people of all ages are employed than would have been if no such machinery had been invented. This is a good instance of what are the principles lately attempted to be introduced among us; one should not be surprised if those who support them endeavoured to persuade us that all these improvements are contrary to the rights of man; if they succeed, they will have the merit of making men hazard their lives by a breach of the law for no other purpose than to abolish that on which they depend for the subsistence of themselves and their families. The truth is, I believe, that if ever this new system was to take place, the effect would be, that the next day all the rich would be ruined, above half the industrious would be soon put out of employ, and in a little time all the poor would be starved.

WE hear a great deal about the *Americans* and the *French*, and the excellent governments they have established; and one of the great apostles of the new doctrines tells us how much we should profit by adopting the like governments. In the first place, I am strongly inclined to suspect the friendship of this gentleman's advice. He tells us himself that he began by doing this country all the harm in his power in favour of America; that he formed the scheme, during the war with that country, of coming to England, for the purpose of broaching his principles; and seems to have thought, that if people were mad enough to listen to him, we should soon have been in such a situation, that neither America nor any other country would have had any thing to fear from us. I am told he has since resided principally in France, where he has probably found new reasons for making this attempt;---and yet this impostor now gravely tells you, that this is done for your good, and from his great regard for your welfare; as far as himself is concerned he risks little, as, by all accounts, he has neither property nor reputation to lose.

THIS gentleman tells us we have no Constitution, and that what we have is wretchedly bad, and that therefore we should overturn it, and get the American or the French constitution as fast as we can. I do not imagine any of my countrymen know what these American or French constitutions are; and, I confess, I hardly think it worth their inquiry while they are happy under our own. I believe, however, the fact is, that the Americans, after they left us, were under great difficulty how to go on at all; luckily for them Mr. Paine was not at hand to preach confusion; they had still some notion left of the British constitution, under which they had so long lived, and they had sense enough to conform to it as nearly as they could—the consequence is, they have gone on tolerably well for some time, and if they don't follow worse examples, I still hope they will do better. As to France, their old government was bad enough, and what never could have existed here; what it is now it is difficult to say: I am told that, in fact, they have no government at all; and what it will end in he must be very wise or very bold that will guess. The Americans, after they left us, were obliged to make one for themselves, and what did they do? they took the British constitution for a model as near as circumstances would allow, and so they are doing pretty well, as Mr. Paine is not there to prevent them. The French had a bad constitution in many things; it might therefore be proper to alter or amend it; but they thought themselves too wise to follow us, as the Americans had done, and so they fell to work on Mr. Paine's *Rights of Man*, and what fine work they have made of it we all know. But whether their present confusion and distress shall at last settle into something like our government, or, after a great deal of bloodshed, lead to something worse than they suffered before, what is that to us? We have long found the good effects of *our own* constitution, and certainly never more than at present, we have therefore no need of trying experiments to mend it. If my neighbour be in a fever, his family do right to get him an apothecary and a physician, to have him physicked, and blooded, and blistered; but am I, in perfect health, to undergo all those miserable operations because I am told my neighbour has been somewhat the better for them, though still in agonies and convulsions? much less if I have reason to think these very prescriptions are what have brought him to the brink of the grave. My friends, it is only by puzzling us

with hard words that they can hope to impose on us; let the case be fairly stated, as between man and man, and it is impossible we should be blind to the folly and the danger of it.

MR. PAINE is always endeavouring to impose upon us by the *economy* of his plans. He tells us we are oppressed and ruined by taxes; and he proposes, if we will let him make a new constitution for us, to save us a world of expence, by turning adrift all the present servants of Government, and having only a certain number of officers, by whom all the business of the nation is to be done. Our taxes (one half of which were laid on to pay the debt of the America war, in which Mr. Paine was so active against us) to be sure, are heavy, and I am glad to find that our present managers have begun to take off some of them; but I don't find we have been ruined even by these taxes; on the contrary, we have been thriving apace under the present government, though our debts and necessary public expences oblige us to pay what we do at present. But what is the reason we pay any of these expences? Because the business of a nation, like that of an individual, cannot be done without paying the servants it necessarily employs. Mr. Paine does not attempt to prove that the servants he proposes would be sufficient to do the business, but has only made the discovery that if you had fewer servants at less wages it would cost you less. This may be very true, but if any body were to advise a farmer to part with his labourers, or a manufacturer with his workmen, under pretence of diminishing his expences, and it appeared that he did this without considering the extent and manner of cultivating the farm, or the nature and profit of the manufacture, do you think that either would be foolish enough to take advice? If they did, the consequence would be, that at the end of the year the farmer would be turned out for not paying his rent, and the manufacturer would become bankrupt.

MR. PAINE talks as if all men were philosophers like himself; but even philosophers *like Mr. Paine* can preach one thing and practise another; can have a great deal about the *Rights of Man*, and about justice and virtue, in their mouths, yet do a great deal of wrong, and swindle and cheat, and give justice and virtue the slip in their lives and their conduct*.

MR. PAINE, though he would have no objection to set people loose to rob and cut one another's throats, is a great pretender to humanity, and therefore gives us a fine plan for providing for the poor and the aged. I don't grudge what I pay to the poor, though I have heard some wise and good men say, that, even in the way it is given them at present, it does them often more harm than good, by making them idle and worthless, instead of being industrious and sober. But Mr. Paine's plan would set them all idle at once, and so make us pay for that wretchedness and vice which would be the sure effects of their idleness, and, after all, make the condition of the poor themselves worse than it ever was before. What would my *Manchester* friends say to that, or what would the thousands of their workmen say, whom they now make comfortable and happy by the manufactures in which they employ them? Would not the certain consequence be, that the government would be very soon unable to make the poor any allowance at all, because it is only from the industry of the nation that the public income is drawn. The nation would then be a *pauper* itself. This, I believe, Mr. Paine, notwithstanding his boasted humanity, would be very glad to see, for the sake of those good French friends, whom he plainly tells us he wishes "surrounded with revolutions." This would be a revolution indeed; if instead of the present situation of Great Britain, its manufactures thriving, its trade increasing, its wealth abounding, its debt in a fair way of being paid, its credit high, and its power respectable, beyond those of any other country in the world, it should be reduced by seditious, profligate, or misguided men, to a state of poverty, weakness, contempt, and misery.

MY friends, I am no philosopher, no fine writer, though I got a tolerable education at the Charter House, and remember a little of my *grammar* as well as Mr. Paine. But without philosophy or fine writing, I may venture to beseech you, not to throw away all the blessings you possess on a wild experiment to find something better, and that too on the authority of people who have an interest in misleading you. For my part, I am come to an age that cannot look for living long to enjoy our present national

...but I have children and grand-children, and I cannot bear to think, that folly or wickedness should endanger the happiness which I hope they will inherit, by having the good fortune to be born under the *British Constitution*.

• Mr. Paine is said to be endeavouring to persuade his friends, that a gross violation of the rights of man was committed the other day, when he was arrested for a just debt.

AN IMPORTANT CONTRAST.

Under the English Constitution.

I. The British Empire---internally, happy, rich, and flourishing;---externally---firm in credit, universally respected, great and powerful.

II. Her KING---beloved by the people; and treated with a respect, veneration, and dignity, worthy the Supreme Head of a FREE NATION.

III. Her REVENUE so productive, as to cause a reduction of taxes.

IV. Millions of Specie in full circulation.

V. Not a farthing loss on the discount of the National Bank Paper of England.

VI. Her COMMERCE at home and abroad, expanding her golden pinions, wide, general, and extensive.

VII. Her COLONIES flourishing, and in a state of powerful security.

VIII. Her ARMY and NAVY, from the immense resources of the kingdom, able instantly to act, in case of necessity, with force and vigour.

☞ Such are the present blessings of a Constitution which incendiary writers represent as unworthy the possession and enjoyment of a great and FREE PEOPLE!!!

Under the French, or "Rights of Men" Constitution.

I. The French Empire---internally, convulsed and distracted---rent throughout with factions, and daily stained with blood from riots, insurrections, and massacres:---externally, bankrupt in credit, despicable in power, and claiming the pity, not the respect, of mankind.

II. Her MONARCH---"a King of shreds and patches"---rendered a slave to the will of faction---the shadow only of sovereignty---disrobed of dignity, and treated with insult and contempt by subjects styling themselves---free.

III. Her REVENUE so inadequate to her expenditures as to demand the ruinous expedient of millions of *paper money*, to support the common exigencies of her Government.

IV. Not a tenth part of one million of Specie in circulation through her vast kingdom.

V. Thirty per cent. loss on the discount of *National Assignats* of France.

VI. Her COMMERCE sunk and enervated at home---abroad, in the most rapid progress of annihilation.

VII. Her richest COLONY nearly destroyed, and the rest under the most alarming prospects of a similar fate.

VIII. Her ARMY, from discontents, deserted by her best Officers;---and her NAVY, without order, without pay, and without force.

☞ Such are the present miseries of a Constitution, which Tom Paine and his advocates recommend as a model to all the nations upon earth; though it has plunged a once great, happy, and loyal people, into an abyss of national bankruptcy and destruction!!!

TO OUR CORRESPONDENTS.

WE should be obliged to Historicus for the remaining Numbers, to enable us to decide on his Proposal.

J. W. A. may be assured that we ever guard against the Circumstance he mentions with all possible Care.

On Justice, an Eastern Story, is deficient in Probability, as well as in the Spirit and of the Oriental Style.

The Behaviour of Socrates in his dying Moments, appeared in our last.---With respect to Enigmas, W. G. may recollect that we have more than once declared them inadmissible.